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SUBJECT: JORDAN: JANUARY 11 MEDIA REACTION TO GAZA

¶1. SUMMARY: Major media in Jordan went into overdrive during the local weekend and Sunday with news coverage of developments in connection with the conflict in Gaza. The major themes of the coverage were Israel's determination to continue its offensive despite the passage of UNSCR 1860 and mounting civilian casualties, and large-scale demonstrations and other public protests around Jordan. Secondary themes included public statements by HAMAS officials. Editorials and op-ed commentary demanded additional punitive measures on Israel and its allies. END SUMMARY.

¶2. Major newspapers published in Jordan today and over the local weekend covered developments related to the conflict in Gaza with banner headlines, vivid photos, and countless details in their inside pages. Front-page reports in all papers highlighted Israel's determination to continue its offensive, detailed the casualties among Palestinian civilians in Gaza, and reported on the "heroism" of militants in response. Papers also covered ongoing international efforts to end the conflict, including the new UN Security Council resolution and its rejection by Israel and Hamas. Public demonstrations Friday and Saturday within Jordan also received expansive treatment.

¶3. Sunday's newspapers featured extensive coverage of Saturday's demonstrations throughout Jordan to express public anger over Gaza. Lengthy coverage with photos was given to the sit-in organized by the Jordan Press Association, during which participants called for the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador. JPA President Abdulwahab Zgheilat stated that "this silence will not last and we will continue to struggle in favor of the people of Gaza." There was also specific coverage of a candlelight vigil organized by the Council of Churches in Jordan, as well as the sit-in held by the doctors and nurses of Al-Hussein Cancer Center. Some newspapers reported on a statement issued Thursday by the Shura Council of Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood which called for closing the Israeli embassy and expelling its ambassador on the grounds that it was "the least we can do."

¶4. Sunday's editions of Jordan's two independent dailies, Al-Ghad and Al-Arab Al-Yawm, featured wire service accounts of HAMAS political supremo Misha'al's televised speech from Damascus on Saturday in which he stressed his rejection of a truce with Israel and the deployment of international forces because "they would protect Israel's security." Commenting on UNSCR 1860, Misha'al said that "the one required to implement the resolution is the one that committed the aggression."

¶5. All major newspapers on Saturday covered the passage of UN Security Council Resolution 1860 calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. The focus of the coverage, however, was almost entirely on Israel's rejection of the resolution in favor of continuing its offensive. Coverage of the ceasefire resolution was secondary to reports on the massive demonstration organized in Amman's Rabiah district on Friday which drew "tens of thousands" of participants. The demonstration ended with violent confrontations between riot police and individual demonstrators seeking to approach the Israeli embassy. Large-scale demonstrations were reportedly conducted throughout Jordan on Friday following prayers.

¶6. Saturday's newspapers reported that Al-Jazeera Amman bureau chief

and Al-Ghad columnist Yaser Abu Hilala was hospitalized for injuries to his head and face from blows he received from security personnel while covering the Rabiah demonstration. King Abdullah reportedly telephoned Abu Hilala to inquire about his health. Abu Hilala's crew members also received medical treatment for similar injuries. Prime Minister Dahabi, Royal Court adviser Safadi, Interior Minister Fayed, and Minister of State for Media Affairs and Communications Joudeh paid visits to the television journalist and his crew at the hospital. Al-Jazeera Television covered the demonstrations in Amman and in Ma'an, reporting that Ma'an protestors waved photos of Osama bin Laden, Saddam Hussein, and former Jordanian Prime Minister Wasfi al-Tal. Video footage also showed some masked demonstrators carrying guns.

¶7. On Saturday, the online news outlet Ammoun News posted a story citing the Israeli online news outlet Ynetnews as reporting that Jordan had recalled its ambassador to Israel. The Israeli outlet quoted GOI Foreign Ministry spokesman Yossi Levy as commenting on Saturday about rumors of Jordan's recall. Levy said, "Ambassador Ali al-Ayed left for Amman prior to the launching of Operation Cast Lead, in order to attend a conference held by the Jordanian Foreign Ministry. We have learned from the media that he has decided to extend his stay in Jordan and has yet to return to Israel." The original Ynetnews report states that "an Arab official told Ynet that Jordan recalled the ambassador as an act of protest, even though it had initially claimed that he was asked to return to Amman over an 'internal matter'.... and that "a diplomatic source told Ynet that Ambassador Ali al-Ayed will return to Tel Aviv only after Hamas and Israel sign a ceasefire agreement to end the fighting." No other Jordanian news outlet has published the story.

¶8. Saturday's Al-Ghad published a full-page article based on its

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interview in Damascus with HAMAS deputy political chief Abu Marzouq. He criticized Israel, Palestinian President Abbas, and Egypt in unequivocal terms for breaking the truce. Abu Marzouq stated that HAMAS' final position on the French-Egyptian ceasefire initiative had not yet been determined, but would be communicated directly to Egypt. He commanded King Abdullah for his statements on "a conspiracy" against the Palestinian people, and warned that unidentified U.S. officials were proposing to create an alternative homeland for Palestinians in Jordan. Abu Marzouq also stated that talks to reconcile the Palestinian factions were not a priority pending an end to the situation in Gaza.

¶9. Editorial Commentary

-- ""Resolution 1860 Ignored Elements That Could Impede Its Implementation"

Columnist Nasouh Al-Majali in the January 11 edition of the government-aligned, pro-Palestinian Arabic daily Ad-Dustour opines, "The UN Resolution on the Israeli aggression against Gaza reflects the power struggle inside the UN Security Council and not the situation on the ground in Gaza. The resolution also ignored many important aspects which has led the two parties involved in the conflict to refrain from implementing the resolution.... The problem with reaching a solution in Gaza and achieving a political settlement lies in reforming and solidifying the Arab stance and in achieving Palestinian political reconciliation on the basis of a political vision that meets the demands of those who resist peace and the demands and efforts of those who call for it."

-- "U.S. Support For The War Of Annihilation"

Chief editor Taher Odwan in the January 11 edition of the independent, opposition Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm comments, "The Pentagon has announced a process of shipping military equipment to Israel as soon as possible. Meanwhile, the U.S. Congress made a majority decision that supports the war of annihilation Israel is waging against the Gaza Strip. Those decisions and stances carry a big load of provocation of Arab and Palestinian sentiments, not to mention that they constitute an expression of animosity against the Arabs and a blind bias towards the Zionist entity.... Now, amidst questions being raised about the next required Arab step to confront

the continuation of the war of annihilation and Israel's rejection of the UNSC resolution, the most useful way to confront the aggression is for Arab officials to completely turn around and face the United States and exert pressure on its 'incoming and outgoing' leaderships to stop their disdain of Palestinian blood and their exaggerated expressions of support for the gang of criminals in Tel Aviv.... Unless there are official escalatory Arab stances against the U.S. policy - stances which threaten to withdraw the Arab initiative, sever all forms of ties with the Zionist entity, and stop security cooperation with the United States and its armies that are positioned in bases on Arab territories from the ocean to the gulf - the status quo will prompt Israel to unleash its hands and war machinery across the region so as to burn the interests and legitimacy of the Arab order before it burns the mosques, schools, and the steadfast and patient people of Gaza."

-- "Israel Is A Renegade Terrorist Entity"

The main editorial (January 11) in Ad-Dustour fulminates, "Reality and events have proven that the support provided by Washington, Paris, and London for the Zionist entity - throughout its black history until now - are the reason behind the latter's excessive perpetration of its crimes and war of annihilation against the Palestinians. The continuation of the holocaust those steadfast people are being subjected to for fifteen days is attributable to the stance of those countries, which have equated the victim with the executioner. Those countries sought to postpone the UN Security Council's session for the longest time possible and finally formulated a resolution that uses vague language.... The massacres being committed by the gangs of the Israeli occupation in Gaza affirm that Israel is a renegade terrorist entity and that Washington, Paris, and London have contributed and continue to contribute to this entity's overstepping international law and its refusal to abide by the resolutions of international legitimacy. This makes it incumbent on the Arab order to take a unanimous decision to sever relations with those gangs and offer support for the fraternal Palestinian people to save them from the Zionist holocaust."

-- "Good Arab Performance that Wrenched a UNSC Resolution"

Columnist Jamil Nimri in the January 10 edition of the independent Arabic daily Al-Ghad opines, "The Arab delegation came out satisfied. It is one of the few times in which it has succeeded in wrenching the resolution it wants, maybe not in full; Arab media correspondents unanimously agreed that the Arab performance this time was good and strong.... What comes after this resolution? The criminal war continues until Israel decides to stop it! This is true, but the resolution remains as a frame of reference for the

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subsequent negotiations that will determine the shape and details of the settlement of each portfolio. Meanwhile, the enormous popular campaign that condemns the Zionist crime must continue. Every additional day that passes without Israel's adherence to a cease-fire justifies the escalation of punitive measures against the aggressors.... The fact is that prosecuting Israel and its leaders as war criminals should continue to be pursued by international and social institutions after a cease-fire is realized. Is there any thing more horrific than what was discovered in Al-Zaytoun district yesterday!? Children on the verge of death after being terrorized and left without food and water for four days near their dead mothers' bodies and many injured people who died because ambulances were banned from reaching them for four days running!?"

-- "What Comes After The Political Vacuum?"

Columnist Fahed Fanek in the January 10 edition of the leading, government-owned Arabic daily Al-Rai writes, "The interim period in Washington has provided Bush's administration with a chance to avoid doing anything that would be binding on the incoming administration or that would put it before a fait accompli, hence, leaving the decision to Obama's administration. By doing so, Bush's administration has relieved itself from the duty of intervening to stop the aggression and has given Israel enough time to finish its aggressive mission.... For his part, Obama did not intervene and he

did not even express an opinion about the issue - other than voicing concern over the lives of innocent civilians on both sides - under the pretext that America is always under the administration of one president with full authority, who in this case is Bush. As for the president-elect, he has no right to take action before he becomes the actual president and takes office.... The threads of the conspiracy, the way for which the Israeli aggression is trying to pave, are becoming clearer and clearer. The requirement is to wipe Palestine out of the map by putting Gaza under Egypt's administration, just as was the case until 1967, and putting whatever Israel has conceded from the West Bank under Jordan's administration. Even if the process is so hard to fathom, sprinkling it with some money would make it acceptable.... If such a scheme is announced by the new U.S. administration and if Obama lays his weight in that direction, then Jordan's and Egypt's rejection of and objection to this scheme will become more difficult and very costly. Hence, what is required now is an official and public rejection of the scheme to cut the road on a rejected solution so that Obama would not get involved in an attempt to impose a solution on parties that have previously announced their rejection of it."

-- "From January 9 to 20!"

Columnist Jamil Nimri in the January 11 Al-Ghad observes, "The ongoing war has passed the January 9th due date [when Abbas' presidential term ended] and moves us to the January 20th due date when new American President Obama takes office.... This may mean the involvement of the new administration from the start and in direct conflict with final status negotiations and the interests of the current Israeli leadership - headed by Barak and Livni.... President-elect Obama had stated that the incoming administration intends to embark on a new peace process, which suggests bypassing the bogus format via which Bush's administration had tackled the Annapolis track without making a single step towards the 'vision' of a two-state solution.... The new administration has offered signs of a different approach to conflicts in the region based on serious search for solutions, which presumably includes opening channels of dialogue with 'the enemies' vis-`-vis Taliban and Iran. Indeed, based on other statements, there is this idea of opening indirect channels of dialogue with Hamas."

BEECROFT